

JAN 1971

#21

WESTERN POTTER



"THE WESTERN POTTER"

STARRING . . .

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NELSON, B C.

THE WESTERN POTTER NO. 21
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For one performance only the Western Potter is being directed and produced by the Kootenay School of Art. The editor is enjoying this experience very much but feels she should publicly state that she is not really responsible for anything that may happen. Already sheets of covers grace the production room floor and there is a fine photograph of one member of the printing team strangling one of our resident photographers.....

Happy potting year from the mountain vastness of Nelson.

Editor

A DUAL EXPERIENCE IN LEARNING

This fall a program was instigated in the ceramics studio in the Faculty of Education at U.B.C. The project revolves around the concept of learning through relationships. The point of departure of the program is ceramics and the key participants are two specific groups of students. One group consists of volunteer students from the ceramics major in art education. The second group is made up of twenty-two boys and girls ages 10-15 all of whom have some difficulty in learning.

The project arose through concerns for: the small amount of actual time which student teachers get to work with children in their 4 or 5 year training program, for the lack of opportunity for these students to develop and experiment with their own independent approaches to teaching, without fear of failure through final marks, and the lack of attention paid to the concept of learning one subject in relationship to another.

This particular group of children was selected to satisfy a curiosity about the questions: Why some children are slow to learn? Is it possible to stimulate a desire to learn within these children through a situation which is activity oriented and which uses "real" equipment?

And so we have a situation which includes; one well-equipped studio, 22 children, and x number of volunteer university students, coupled with a purpose to stimulate a desire to learn by teaching through relationships using ceramics with all its diversity as the springboard of operation.

Learning in this experience occurs for the student teacher as well as the child and it takes place through both groups of individuals choosing their activity for participation. Teaching occurs on a one to one basis or in small groups with the various children teaming up with the older students who happen to be doing the activity which is of most interest to that particular

child or group. Some of the children will bounce from one activity to another quite rapidly while others will stay with a given task for several days running. If a child has nothing to do he is left to mosey about until he finds something of interest. Each week fewer children spend less time trying to decide what to do. In some instances however, if the child becomes destructive during his inactive periods something will be suggested which might interest him. For example, in the case of two young trouble dreamers, who kept bouncing between one mischievous thing and another, when given the responsibility of stacking then firing the kiln completely by themselves, they came through with flying colors. In this task they proved to be more reliable than some of the university students.

Some of the activities being used to date include scientific experiments relating to earth materials. Some of the children have gone on short field trips gathering earthy materials to test their reactions to high temperatures. This type of work is relative to their science experience as well as weights and measurements for it is necessary to understand how to use a scale if one is preparing accurate experiments. Some of the children have been involved almost completely in activities which have nothing to do with making things. In the instance of one young boy, he spent three days using the clay mixer. He helped bring bags of clay up from the storeroom, wheeled the handtruck carrying several hundred pounds of clay, learned how to grease the mixer with the grease gun and is perfectly capable of teaching his classmates both how to lubricate the equipment and how to mix clay from powder. He knows just the right feel of the clay before it goes into the pug mill and he is able to operate the pug following directions to the letter. His sense of accomplishment is overwhelming when he is able to show two or three bins of freshly mixed clay which he has produced during the day. The last day before the Christmas Holidays however, he was overheard saying he thought he should get some clay and make something. With the confidence he now has he will proceed with more enthusiasm than on his first three days of working in the studio.

Quite by accident, two young girls made clay objects whose inspiration could have been the nests of mud dauber wasps and barn swallows. A trip to the library and a glance through several books about insects and birds was stimulation enough for two children to start and complete unassigned library projects related to these two creatures. This is interesting, for past library experience for these children involved just sitting and maybe looking at a few pictures. With further experience, the student teachers will be able to set situations in which more of this type of learning occurs.

Because many of the children have difficulty related to their inability to read, a group of volunteers from one of the faculties remedial reading courses has been obtained, to work with the children specifically on their reading. They are free to use any technique which they would like to try, however, they must develop with the child materials for him to read which pertain to the activities in which the child is engaged. Tape recorders are available and the children are encouraged to use them at any time to record information about their work. Some of them have interviewed university students as they pass the studio while others are experimenting with making and recording sounds which are interesting to them. Much of this material can be used by either the reading specialists or by the childrens' classroom teachers for related work once they are back in their school during the remainder of the week. It is interesting to come into the studio for amongst the hive of activity one may find a youngster busy working on the wheel while at the same time reading aloud to his reading helper. If the child isn't careful, he will have learned to read without knowing it.

So far, mention has been made about the more active side of learning. It would be a mistake to overlook the social benefits which are derived from this type of learning situation. Most of the children would not converse with any adult other than their teacher when they first came to the studio. Now, with one exception, all are able and eager to converse with any adult that

enters the room. Once the avenue of communication is opened between the child and the so called teacher, the battle is half over. The child comes rushing into the room and heads directly for his point of interest, he needn't wait to be told what to do for if he gets stuck he is able to ask someone for assistance. With some children the learning may be slower but if there is pleasure in being with people and in doing things, the time it takes to master the task is irrelevant.

Jean Marie Weakland

THE MAGIC OF THE EXHIBIT

Galleries change exhibits frequently. Throughout the year, theatres offer full schedules of drama. Novels are published daily. In fact, artists working in all media regularly place their work before the public. Why is this?

Money, would be the most obvious reason which comes to mind. However, though it is nice to have and quite necessary, it is not the primary reason. Looking at the situation through experience as a performer in dance and now as a potter and weaver it is my belief that the reason for exhibiting, either in the concert world or the gallery, is one quite closely related to the development of the artist.

Let me illustrate with a comparison between dance and ceramics. Beginners in either art spend the first years in sheer torture, humiliation and frustration trying to master the mechanical skills of their art. If patience lasts, the dancer eventually reaches a point where fulfillment comes through the exhilaration of moving through space with fluidity. He also finds pleasure and satisfaction in performing other artists compositions. The potter, too, reaches heights technically where he is carried along on the sensory satisfaction he gets from a harmonious working of his hands in re-

lation to the spinning clay. Excitement and stimulation at a motor sensory level lasts for varying lengths of time. Some people remain content working at this level while others would be dancers and potters would soon stop and seek other entertainment. A few people will be caught by either medium and will seek a new level of performance. Within this new struggle for attainment, ideas begin to emerge through improvisation with the materials and techniques of the art. The artist because of his skill and dexterity is able to wander imaginatively causing ideas to evolve, first singly, then in relationship to others. The dancer skillfully takes these fragments and blends them into a harmony of motion which states quite clearly his idea. The idea is then ready for presentation in concert to the public. For a potter, each fragment of the idea stands by itself just as individual human beings do, but these fragments may also be drawn together to form a total composition as when people of similar commitments come together for a given purpose. At this point, the potter is ready for exhibit.

You see then, the similarities and close relationship in the stages of composition in both dance and ceramics. Once the idea is complete, and it goes before the public, the situation changes. The potters completed work is presented in exhibition to the public. Before the opening night he had been free to make any changes which time would permit. He could stand back, take a second look and review his work and total composition critically. He could choose to be available to talk with the public or just mingle with them. Or he could choose to remain away in order to give his work the test of speaking for itself undefended by words. In either case he is able to sense their reactions to his work.

The dancer, however, has a more difficult task come opening night. His performance will be a new one for he has not had the magic of opening night to stimulate him while rehearsing in the studio. He hasn't been able to view his work critically other than through his sensory perception in rehearsal. The

composition must remain fixed throughout the performance even though it is affected instantly by the response of the audience. The audience have the pleasure of sharing in the exhilaration of the performance and if they should later venture back stage they may also share in the artist's stages of let down which are a result of the performance. At this point the artist may be asked to respond verbally to his work. The performance is over, it may have lasted for just a few minutes. The people will see the piece only once, they may not return for further understanding and enjoyment, but must rely on the total experience of past performance.

The public does not get the chance to live through some of the high and low moments which the potter had experienced during his months of performance. And when they question him he has had an opportunity to step back and assess his work before having to answer. If they do question him it can be with the work before them both. The public may return several days later and gain further insight to the idea.

Though the experiences of exhibiting the finished work in these two arts differ, each artist learns how to benefit from the response of the public to his performance. He is able to gain greater insight into his work by placing his ideas in the open where they may be judged by both himself and others. He may not agree with the judgment of others but that is his prerogative. But one misses a great deal in his creative life if he avoids the magic of the public performance, and it is this experience which I believe makes exhibits--be they in the theatre, between the covers of a book, or in a gallery--so necessary to the life of an artist.

Jean Marie Weakland

REVIEW OF JEAN MARIE WEAKLAND SHOW FIBRE AND CLAY

HELD AT HANDCRAFT HOUSE LAST FALL

Jean Marie Weakland's pots are grabby. The hand finds them lustful, calling to be stroked, rubbed, picked up.

A low, muted boulder with raincup of purest white glaze against unglazed body held a quiet, introspective Zen quality.

"Small round form" \$4.00 - #18 read the price list.

A palm full of feeling of which Wendy exclaimed, "only four dollars for that, gee I want to walk around holding onto it". Urgent sculptural pieces pushed themselves up off slabs and hunks of wood like growths expanding up off the forest floor. Those rubbed with Blackbird and splashed with salt water before the reduction firing came through stronger to me than the groups given a later low-fire glaze. Some stood singly, others placed in pairs or twos; and several grouped as a fired unit with two strong vertical parts joined by a compressed cushion shape or shapes between. In one instance jute fibres were also introduced into this pressured space between the verticals to give even greater sense of interior or inner form compression.

"Compote" the word used to describe a series of half a dozen or more structures seemed too refined, too delicate for these pushing, closely fitted structures topped with undulating bowl tops. Sometimes the harshly glazed interiors of these top bowls seemed at odds with the strength of the rest of the unglazed bases.

The teapots and goblets were 'fun' things to us; ranks of reeling shapes which said that utility could be amusing. Though I felt somewhat uneasy in my mind at the fun of balancing some of the teapots when full.

The raku pieces, some rubbed before firing, to a sensuous, low, smoky sheen were subtle, seeking and felt as primitively right as some Indian pots.

Jean Marie Weakland



The woven constructions--tubular, cool, self-contained--did not grab my hands (luckily, since many were natural or white) but in slight movement, from the air of passers-by, they quietly, insistently, engaged my eyes to look again and perceive more than the first general impression--to become aware of small, intimate patterns created by the twisting of the open-weave areas.

This was a show which called for quiet, contemplative looking. I'd like to see at least a part of it tour the province as a means of exposing potters in the out-back, like myself and my students, to the thinking that is going on in the urban area.

Frances Hatfield

EXPOSITION GALLERY

'Survival from birth to death' is the basic concern of Yugoslavian-born Zeljko Kudjundzic, whose exhibition opens October 13 at 7:30 pm and runs to October 27. He describes his works as emotional documentaries, using only what he considers as essential in the realm of subject matter, with results that are as dramatically vivid as the themes he portrays. He works in all materials at his disposal--metal, clay, wood, and canvas.

Kudjundzic was director of the Kootenay School of Art for four years, later moving to Kelowna where he established an Art Centre. Two years ago, after his return from Mexico where he was resident artist at the Institute Allende, he was invited to join the Faculty of Penn State U. to set up a new Art Department at the Fayette Campus.

Some thirty recent works are on display at the exhibition, including ceramics and some small monochrome sketches.

Throwing by Walter Dexter
Part 1



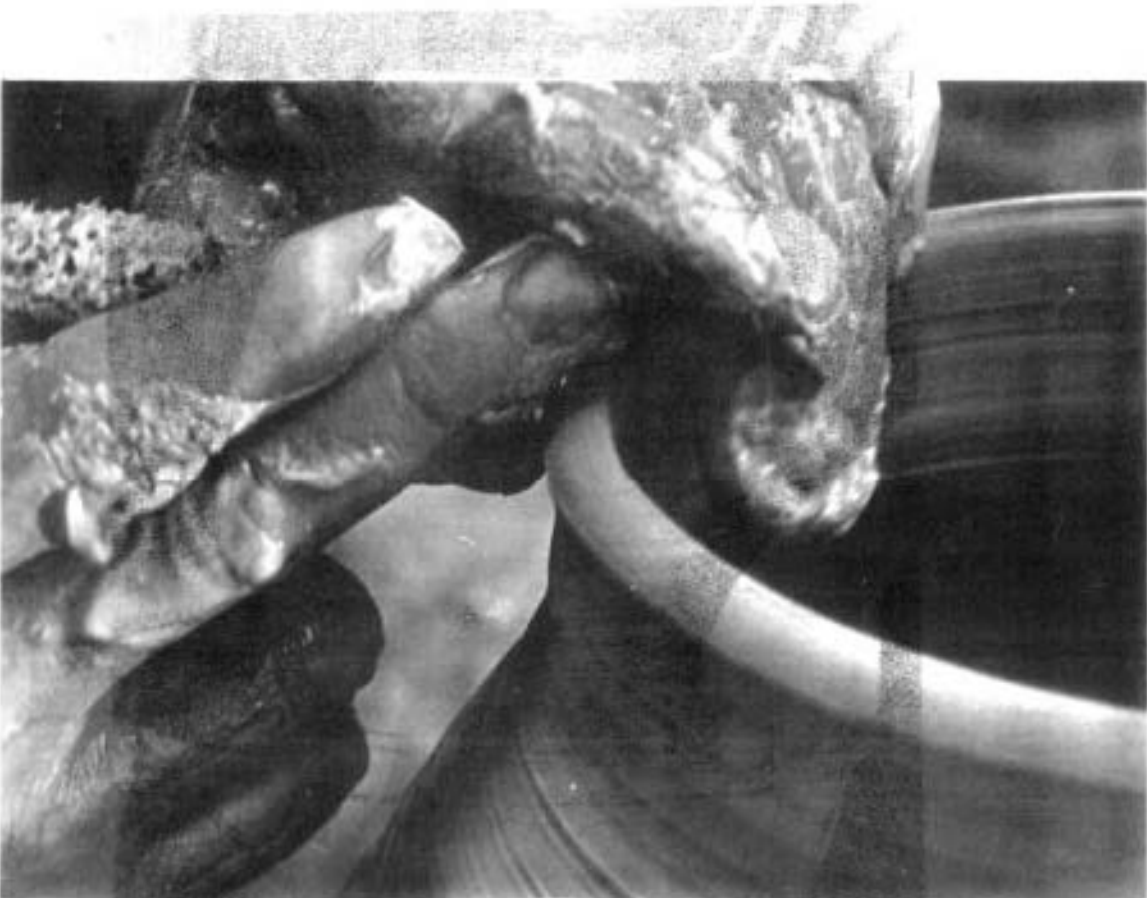


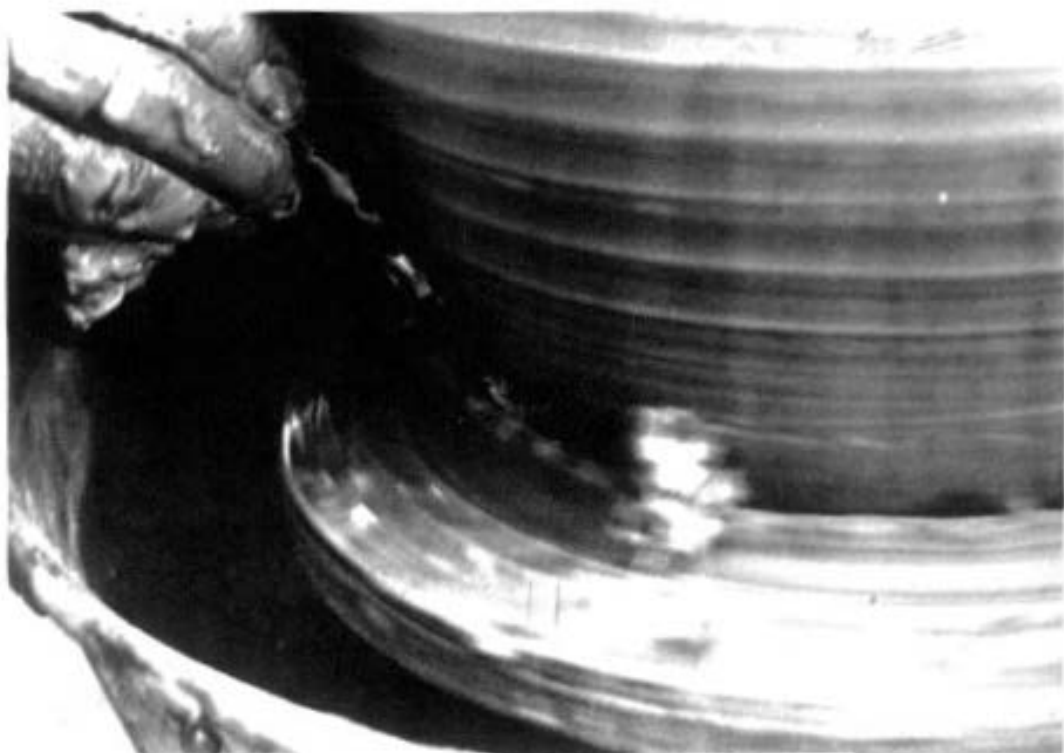












FIRE-AWAY

The MONTHLY-MINI EXHIBITS will continue into the new year. In case you have forgotten the arrangements they are as follows: One piece may be exhibited by any member of the guild. Pieces should be delivered or mailed directly to Handcraft House, 110 W. Esplanade, N. Van. by the stated dates. They must be picked up promptly at the close of each exhibit or they will be returned C.O.D. Pieces should be marked either with selling price (1/3 retained by Handcraft House) or NSF. The schedule for the next few months is as follows:

MOON-SHOT POTS	rec. Jan. 15 & 16	runs Jan. 19-30
PLATES	rec. Feb. 12 & 13	runs Feb. 16-27
UMBARELLA STANDS	rec. March 12 & 13	runs March 16-27
PLANTARS	rec. April 16 & 17	runs April 20-30
GARDEN PIECES	rec. May 14 & 15	runs May 18-29

The first exhibit - Wine containers was very successful with approximately 18 entries. I made the mistake of scheduling the teapot exhibit too close to Hycroft-- sorry about that. But you have some advance notice for the coming ones so get busy and join the fun.

The monthly newsletter will continue however we will alternate with the Craft Contacts newsletter. Our news will be included and you will be able to know what is happening in other crafts. We hope you will enjoy this new system.

The Dept. of Continuing Education at U.B.C. is scheduling two workshops in kiln building given by Frank Colson from Florida. Both will be in the summer, one in Vancouver, the other somewhere in the province. For information please write directly to Mr. Phil Moir at Cont. Ed. U.B.C.

Workshops begin this January. The general theme is "Towards the Compleat Potter", with the first one dealing with Standards and Qualities. Dates for this are not final.



Geoff ' Obscene ' Searle

THE WARMTH

There are definite periods
when I can be projected,
my loneliness excretes
from my fingertips
into the clay
The wheel turns infinitely
visions of sweetness,
visions of vulgarity,
and the necessary
warmth of the hearth
sparks another firing
in my soul.

by Geoff M. SEARLE

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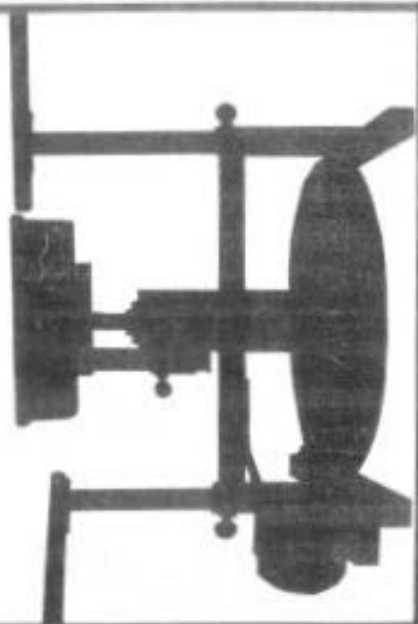
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Note: Permission should be requested from the B.C. Potters' Guild to reprint any part of this publication.

jmr

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I would like to become a member of the B.C. Potters' Guild

NAME _____

ADDRESS: _____

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Send cheques plus exchange to Treasurer of the B.C. Potters' Guild:
Edith Sacker,
3897 W. 4th Ave.,
Vancouver 8, B.C.

(Membership Fees: \$7.00 ... Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley Area.
\$5.00 ... Other Areas
\$3.00 ... Students)